

**The Faction Paradox Protocols,
Volume Three:
"Sabbath Dei"**

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SO, HERE'S HOW THIS WORKS

Volumes 3 and 4 of *The Faction Paradox Protocols* are set in England, 1762. So if you can ignore the fact that the series is about two members of a time-travelling voodoo-cult on the run in a bloody great living spaceship, then... it's basically a period drama.

And like all interesting period dramas it revolves around intrigue, diplomacy and subterfuge in English high society. However, there's an important element here that usually gets missed. At this point in the eighteenth century the Age of Reason is in full swing, and people still aren't quite sure where to draw the lines between science, religion and mysticism: this is an era where Masonic lodges are more powerful than ever before, where politicians frequently belong to groups which dabble (if not entirely seriously) in the near-satanic, and where even the most exalted members of society might be found performing peculiar ritualistic ceremonies behind closed doors. This is the "feel" for Volumes Three and Four, then. Period drama, but with an undercurrent of something highly dubious below the surface, just waiting to be summoned.

Oh, and one more thing. In this era the European intelligence services - the British spy network included - have a bigger penchant for mysticism than just about anyone. Several "set pieces" in the script might suggest certain other well-known spy stories: the gaming-tables, the master-villains, the plots and counter-plots... it isn't accidental.

CHARACTER NOTES: THE PRINCIPALS

1. Cousin Justine. As in Volumes 1-2. However, Justine's changed quite noticeably since someone ate her home and most of her family. By the time we rejoin her she's adjusted to her new role in such a way that she's far

colder, far more aloof and far more self-aware than anyone might have expected. Whereas the old Justine was uncertain about just about *everything*, by now she's become utterly pragmatic, to the point where she can actually be a bit alarming. While she's still formal enough to frequently refer to people as "sir" or by their full titles, there's absolutely no *deference* there now.

2. Sabbath. Agent of the Service - i.e. British intelligence - in 1762. To imagine Sabbath, imagine an eighteenth century Bond-figure who's been trained in ritualism in a time when there's a distinct occult streak running through the entire British establishment and the Service is largely run by Freemasons or Jacobites. Now imagine that he's a lot less smug and a lot less interested in copping off with people than Sean Connery would be, an agent who's dedicated to his job but still has a very definite kind of charm and a fierce (but understated) intelligence. At this point he's still a young operative, in his early-to-mid-twenties, but he's got an obvious talent for what he does and a genuine curiosity about the bizarre events now taking place. The idea is that although Sabbath's the *opposition* in this story, he's not actually the *villain*. If we don't find ourselves liking him then something's wrong.

3. Cousin Eliza. As in volumes 1-2. Eliza's a lot more recognisable as the character we met the first time round. Whereas Justine's become hardened, Eliza's just lost the will to argue, going along with everything that happens simply because there's no reason why she *shouldn't* go along with it. The change in Justine's obviously getting to her, but who else is she going to stick with?

4. King George III. Historical personage, obviously. Remembered by history as "the one who went mad", in 1762 King George is only 24 years old but already showing signs of a somewhat eccentric mind. It's hard to think of him as a young man even though he clearly is: though not *insane*, as yet, he gabbles in such a way that he often comes across as senile, constantly refusing to let others get a word in edgeways and punctuating his sentences with "eh?" and "what?". (Note that these frequent "eh"s are the

sign of a distracted personality, not a way of pointing out that he's upper class. Which is to say, he isn't a comedy posh person.)

5. The Earl of Bute. The King's first minister. Historical personage. A proud Scot and secret Jacobite sympathiser, history records that Bute was a somewhat vain man who grew increasingly paranoid as he gained influence at the royal court. However, he certainly wasn't stupid, and even though this story presents him as a somewhat dubious master-manipulator the truth - as we may well discover - is that he felt deeply uncomfortable holding the reigns of power. The King's most trusted mentor, he's seen by the general public as a Scottish serpent being clutched to the royal bosom, though his accent isn't pronounced. The "M" to Sabbath's Bond.

6. Lord Sandwich. Which is to say, the Earl of Sandwich, remembered by history for inventing... oh, you know. Historical personage. A man of good breeding (though not exactly posh) who, like many of his peer group, takes an interest in the outré and the occult. He's not really a bored aristocrat - the record shows that he was a fairly intelligent and well-educated man, who did a lot of travelling in the east and took a great interest in antiquities - but until now his more *esoteric* interests have just been a bit of a game, and he's obviously unprepared to deal with people like Faction Paradox. As a result, he spends much of this story not knowing how to react and feeling distinctly out of his depth. He's 44 years old.

7. The Sieur d'Eon. Historical personage. Now, this needs some explaining. In real life d'Eon was a master swordsman and spy for the French court, known for a keen intelligence and sense of grace... but there's always been some confusion about his / her gender. In an age where cross-dressing was unknown, d'Eon was generally said to be a man who dressed as a woman for reasons of espionage, yet there were persistent rumours that s/he was a woman who masqueraded as a man, or even that s/he was some kind of hermaphrodite. In this story, although d'Eon is regarded as male by the other characters *s/he is played by a female actor* (the reasons for this may become clear in time). As the story unfolds, d'Eon is the only "historical" character who seems prepared to understand the game being played by Faction Paradox, and is therefore quite reserved and professional

even when faced with the most remarkable situations. Currently 34 years old.

8. Mistress Culver. Mysterious one, this. To begin with nobody knows who she is, and she doesn't seem particularly bothered about telling them. Dry, sardonic and obviously self-reliant, it's clear from the Mistress's manner of speech that she's not native to the eighteenth century: like Justine and Eliza, she seems to come from somewhere outside normal history. She's not altogether unlike Lolita (Volumes 1-2), but without the smug superiority or the megalomaniac tendencies. Nonetheless, we should get the feeling that the two of them may come from the same kind of place. She's practical; has no sense of tact; knows more than everybody else about what's going on; and as a result is destined to become a kind of sarcastic oracle to Justine, Eliza and company.

9. Queen Charlotte. Appears only in Volume Four. We'll deal with her when we get there.

SECONDARY ROLES

Parts played by the main actors "doubling up" (I've tried to keep it to a minimum this time, really I have).

3a. The Automaton. The "monster" of the story. A kind of walking, talking Chinese mannequin, created as a war machine but engineered with a kind of delicate, well-sculpted grace. It speaks with a pronounced, almost over-played, oriental accent: it's essentially a sentient fortune-cookie, which can deliver words of Buddhist wisdom even as it beats the shit out of its opponents. It also supplies the opening narration, which - and I'll come right out and say it - means that it should sound like the narrator out of *Monkey*, if anyone remembers that. (I've allotted this to the actor playing Sabbath, just because the two never share a scene. But if anyone can do a better Chinese mannequin then we might want to shuffle things around.)

8a. The Lady. Nameless English society lady, who exists purely to supply some background for the aristocratic soiree at the beginning of the story. Over-romantic, over-excitabile thrill-seeker who obviously doesn't have much to do with her time. Not overly upper-class, but nonetheless the kind of annoying person who says things like "oh, you *must* come and visit us at *Bordeaux* next summer".

9a. Annabel. English prostitute, 1700's-style. She's only in one scene, but could we please not make her a chirpy Cockney...?

BIT PARTS

Characters who only get one or two lines. Anybody who happens to be hanging around the studio can do them, basically.

The Dealer. In charge of the society card-game. Shouts things like "any more bets?".

Soldiers. Highly-trained Service commando-types. There are two of them, but they're united by the fact that they both shout something at the main characters and then die.

Servant. Man who mutters in Bute's ear. Gets about two complete sentences.

Mistress Culver's Cat. Well, it's a cat. Can we use a real cat? Otherwise somebody's going to have to mew into the microphone.

NOTES ON PRONOUNCIATION: NOW, LISTEN CAREFULLY...

- "Bute" is pronounced "Boot", odd as it may sound.
- "Medmenham" is pronounced "Mednum" (like "Cheltenham" / "Cheltnum")..

- "Saint-Germain" is pronounced "San-Germain" (i.e. the French way).

Pre-Credits Sequence

F/X: Fade in to the sound of a crowd. Not a large crowd, and they're obviously not happy, so maybe "mob" is a better word. There's jeering, booing and general cat-calling, although nobody's chanting anything so it doesn't sound like an organised demonstration. Over the noise we can hear horse's hooves clapping on cobblestones, the sound of a carriage being drawn through the streets. Evidently the crowd are giving the finger to somebody passing by. (In fact we're hearing this scene from inside the carriage, so the hoofbeats stay with us throughout the scene.) After a few moments, the occupants of the carriage speak.

GEORGE: Listen to them, Bute. Just listen! I mean to say, you *expect* this sort of thing from colonials, but Englishmen...

BUTE: Rabble-rousers, your majesty. I'm sure they don't speak for the common man. My intelligence assures me you're not in any way unpopular

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GEORGE: Unpopular? Well, of course I'm not unpopular! But it's not me they're jeering, is it? Mmm?

BUTE [holding his tongue]: I'm... not sure it's wise for us to ride in the same carriage. Not in this climate.

GEORGE: Oh, you worry too much, old friend. They're hardly going to attack us, are they? Attack the royal carriage? Unthinkable.

BUTE: They attacked *my* carriage.

GEORGE: And blessed impertinent it was too. Sometimes I think this is the wickedest... did somebody just throw something?

BUTE: I think it was a potato, your majesty.

F/X: A dull thud from outside the carriage. Something's hit the door.

GEORGE: There, you see? Another one. Wickedness. The wickedest age that was ever seen.

BUTE: It's just the war. They're always restless, when there's a war.

GEORGE: Yes, yes, I'm sure. Still. We'll show them what "war" means, won't we? They won't be so ready to criticise *then*.

F/X: The horse slows to a stop.

GEORGE: Ah! Good. Once the gates are open they'll start to drop away, you'll see. No staying power, these mobs.

BUTE [knows it's not worth arguing]: No, your majesty.

Fade.

3.2

F/X: New scene, new acoustic. Though there's not much background noise, there's a definite echo here, suggesting that we're in a large interior space. If possible the acoustics should suggest a cave or some enormous hall, a great, gothic subterranean area. The only actual effects we hear are two pairs of footsteps, moving down a stone staircase.

KING [coming "closer" as he descends]: ...but you know what the man says in that book of his, don't you? "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains." What d'you make of that, then? Hmm?

BUTE: Rousseau's very popular, I believe. Especially with the intellectuals.

GEORGE: Pff. The man's an ungrateful monster. Book like that, it's practically a call to revolution.

F/X: The footsteps stop. They've reached the bottom of the stairs.

GEORGE: You know, you can almost envy a good machine. No questions about slavery or mastery *there*. None of this endless philosophising. You have to do your duty, and that's an end to it.

BUTE: This way, I think.

F/X: The footsteps continue, although they've left the stairs so the steps aren't as pronounced (still a lot of echo here, though).

GEORGE: Yes. Marvellous what's been done to the architecture down here, isn't it? I'd wager the old Duke would hardly know the place...

F/X: The King stops walking, closely followed by Bute.

GEORGE: A-hah! Now, isn't *that* a wonderful sight?

BUTE: I wouldn't get too close to it, your Majesty.

GEORGE: Oh, really, Bute. Don't be such a nervous old Scot. It won't do anything it's not told to do. Besides, no soldier's going to harm his own King, is he?

BUTE: And does it *know* it's a soldier?

F/X: It's at this point that the "soldier" in front of the King begins to move. It starts slowly, a clattering, hollow sound, skeletal joints clicking in their sockets. It suggests something halfway between ivory and clockwork, a machine which clearly belongs in the industrial age and yet possesses a certain grace in everything it does. There are further whirring, clicking sounds as the automaton comes to life, as if it's uncurling its body and

stretching its limbs. Basically it's the kind of monster you'd expect to be animated by Ray Harryhausen.

GEORGE: Well, my word.

BUTE [mild concern]: Your majesty... it's waking up...

GEORGE: Excellent! Excellent! It certainly looks powerful, doesn't it? Just think what a creature like that could do on a battlefield. The nuisance it could cause!

F/X: The device has finished activating itself. There's a whirr of precision machinery as it moves one of its limbs. Throughout the following lines we can hear the vague ticking of its internal workings in the background, so no scene is ever completely quiet while the automaton's present.

GEORGE: Look, I think it's coming to salute me. Pity the Queen couldn't be here. Charlotte does love a good pantomime show.

BUTE: We did agree, I believe, that we wouldn't use any such machine on the battlefield...

GEORGE: Mmm? Well, no, no. Even the French don't deserve that, I suppose. We've got a *much* better use for a beast like this, haven't we?

BUTE [to himself, somewhat darkly]: Yes. Yes, we have.

F/X: As Bute speaks the machine begins to walk forward, limbs hissing and clattering as it goes. As the scene draws to an close the sound grows louder, and louder, either because it's getting closer or just because it's become the focus of things. The idea is to build up a definite sense of menace from the sound, before the scene ends with...

GRAMS: Title music. As the music fades out, the narrator speaks. For reasons that may or may not become obvious later on, the narrator has the same voice as the automaton (not that we've heard it speak yet).

NARRATOR/ AUTOMATON: Ancient tradition - as inadequate as it may sound, when told by this deplorable narrator - teaches us that when the Buddha found his great enlightenment, he did so by the simple act of sheltering beneath a tree, and in humble meditation seeing the world in its most radiant beauty. But this unworthy storyteller is sad to relate, the Buddha passed from the world of flesh over two-thousand years ago: and this is an age in which lessons of philosophy are written in fire and blood as often as ink on parchment. Yet even so, it is an age of enlightenment. In an age such as this, the noble gentlemen of the west are quick to take what they may from the lands of the east, making fashion of the most exquisite oriental machines and the most esoteric of eastern teachings. In an age such as this, enlightenment is found in the delicacies of clockwork and the most dignified pursuit of gunpowder. For in the calendar of the west, this is the winter of the year seventeen-hundred and sixty-two, and those who wish to learn of nirvana would never dream of doing so beneath a mere tree.

F/X: The background noise of the next scene (see below) begins to fade in behind the narrator's voice.

NARRATOR/ AUTOMATON: As this disreputable tale will demonstrate, one would find far more of interest in the courteous gatherings of English high society. For it is accepted as holy truth that in the modern world, one can learn far more from the gaming-table than from quiet contemplation. This is, after all, the Age of Reason.

3.3

F/X: Party background, eighteenth-century style. A small orchestra is playing in the background, probably light chamber-music by Handel or one of his contemporaries, while all around we can hear the sounds of high society types mixing with each other. Although it's a *soirée* rather than an orgy, those assembled here aren't particularly subdued and there's quite a

lot of high-pitched laughter around the place. We get the impression of maybe forty or so people. When we finally make out individual lines in the noise, the words fade in and out, as if we're moving through the crowd and only hearing snatches from other people's conversations.

DEALER [above the noise]: *Six of Cups. Eighteen.*

LADY: ...if you've ever been to Venice, at all? They say Signor Casanova's the absolute *prince* of wickedness. He says he can move one's soul from body to body just with a kiss. Although one assumes he only practices on women...

SANDWICH: ...no. No, I'm afraid the Chancellor won't be joining us this evening. He has certain... matters of state to attend to.

DEALER: *Twenty-one. The Lady wins.*

D'EON: ...I'm sorry, you must be mistaken. I don't know any "Mistress Culver". If you'll excuse me, I have to speak with the Earl.

LADY: ...so the poor old woman thinks she'll be born again as soon as he puts his lips on her. I mean, it's so *sordid*. Not like *this* at all. Although they say that under the Abbey building there's a... oh, my glass is empty. Pardon me a moment, your grace. There should be a serving-girl somewhere... excuse me? **[No response from the servant.]** I said, excuse -

F/X: The sound of a glass breaking. The idea is that she's just bumped into someone and dropped it.

LADY: Oh!

SABBATH: My lady.

LADY: I'm so *dreadfully* sorry. I suppose we're fortunate the glass was empty, aren't we?

SABBATH: There's a servant in the anteroom hiding a bottle of Casa Rienda. You might want to try it.

LADY: That's quite all right. I saw a girl just now with the wine -

SABBATH: Mixed with cheap gin. You can tell by the colour. Some of the servants have been draining off the French white and selling it in the town.

LADY: Why, that's positively *indecent*. You've got a very good eye, Mr...?

SABBATH: Most of the servants are prostitutes. They tend to be practical about these things.

LADY: Prostitutes...?

SABBATH: The owners of the Abbey have a certain arrangement with them. If you'll excuse me, my Lady...?

LADY [raising her voice, so presumably SABBATH is moving away]: Ahh... sir, if I could delay you for a moment?

SABBATH [from a slight distance]: Of course.

LADY: You must be one of the Earl's friends, yes? You're not one of the *diabolists*, I suppose?

SABBATH: I assure you, my Lady, at this moment in time my only interest is in the card table. However, I'm sure the Earl would tell you that he's hardly satanic.

LADY: Oh, my Lord, you're spoiling the romance! These society balls can be so terribly dull. [**Confidentially, but still over-acting.**] You've heard the stories about this place, haven't you?

SABBATH: Indeed. Then perhaps there'll be something suitably immoral to entertain us later on. My Lady...? **[He fades out here, so he must have moved away.]**

LADY [brief pause as SABBATH leaves]: What an absolutely fascinating sense of fashion.

3.4

F/X: Slight change of tone in the background noise, to suggest that we've moved to another part of the gathering.

D'EON [stiffly, and approaching from the background]: My Lord.

SANDWICH [uneasy]: Oh. D'Eon.

D'EON: I trust your soirée is going to plan.

SANDWICH [sighs]: It's not *my* soirée. I was told to arrange the invitations, that's all.

D'EON: Unwise, I'm sure. Especially at a time like this. Speaking as a diplomat, to hold a ball while we have... *guests* staying here...

SANDWICH: Our "guests" are perfectly safe, thankyou, d'Eon.

D'EON: I'm sure they are. It's hardly *their* safety that's the issue. Of course, speaking as a spy, I'm sure I should welcome this kind of gathering -

SANDWICH: D'Eon, please! If someone hears you talking about -

D'EON: I'm sure everybody's well aware of my reasons for being here. It's what we might call... what's your expression?... a n "open secret". So far I've heard more than a dozen of your ladies and gentlemen talking about me behind my back.

SANDWICH [muttering]: I don't think it's your Frenchness they're talking about...

LADY [arriving]: Your Lordship!

SANDWICH: Oh. Er, my Lady -

LADY: I must say, Lord Sandwich, it's a fascinating place you have here. It's so wonderfully... *corruptive*. Does the whole Abbey belong to you?

SANDWICH: It belongs to, ahh... our Order.

LADY: Oh, of course! That infamous little Club of yours! Can I see the cave where the witch slit her own throat? **[This prompts a bit of a shocked pause from SANDWICH.]**

SANDWICH: My Lady, I assure you -

LADY: I know, I know. It's all rumour and gossip, I'm sure, but please don't disillusion me. A whisper in my ear told me that the King's first minister himself would be here later in the evening...

SANDWICH [uncomfortable]: I hardly think so.

D'EON: That would certainly make things interesting.

SANDWICH: D'Eon!

LADY: My Lord, you've been a deficient host. You haven't even *tried* to introduce us. Who is this dashing gentlem... **[Breaking off, realising.]** ...wait. Did you say... d'Eon?

D'EON: My Lady.

LADY: The *Sieur* d'Eon? The French diplomat?

D'EON: The French *spy*, my Lady. If you'll excuse me. I have business elsewhere. **[Fades out.]**

SANDWICH: I... apologise, my Lady. The Sieur is a good man, but he's a little... unusual.

LADY: But such infamous company! Is it true, what they say about him?

SANDWICH [panicking much too quickly]: Why? What do they say?

LADY: That he can masquerade as a woman for months on end. That he dressed himself as a lady of fashion and fooled the whole of the Russian court.

SANDWICH [relaxing]: Oh. Well, you'd have to ask the Russians, of course.

LADY: And that's not *all* they say about him, if you take my meaning.

SANDWICH: My lady, I assure you, Monsieur d'Eon is quite definitely a male of the species.

LADY: Well, one can't be surprised at the rumours. So many mysteries and secrets. How *do* you ever keep track?

SANDWICH: The Order of Saint Francis does tend to attract a... a certain type of person, it's true.

LADY: So I see.

SANDWICH: I'm sorry?

LADY: Just look at the card table! Lord Newcastle seems to be having a run of bad luck against the scandalous young lady with the dark hair.

SANDWICH: Oh... so he does....

LADY: And what about *that* gentleman? He *certainly* makes an impression.

SANDWICH: What? Which gentleman...?

LADY: There! With the quite outrageously simple cut of clothing. Another of your "visitors"?

SANDWICH [worried pause]: I... don't know...

LADY: I met him not five minutes ago. I don't believe he gave me his name. What exciting lives you must lead, my Lord.

SANDWICH [still puzzled]: Yes. Yes, I suppose we must.

3.5

F/X: Again, a change in tone as we move to another part of the party. The muttering is a little more excited here. We hear the faint *snap* of a playing-card being turned, so evidently we've arrived at the card table. (There may also be the occasional shuffling sound in the background, natch.)

DEALER: *Nineteen. The Mistress wins.*

F/X: A big "ohhhhh!" of disappointment and/ or humour from the crowd. Apparently some of the partygoers are standing around the table, watching the game.

ELIZA [not sorry at all]: Oh, I'm sorry, your Grace, it looks like I've cleaned you out again. Mind you, if you want another go, you could always get a loan off one of your friends...?

F/X: The sounds of one of the Lords leaving the table. Annoyed grunts, various monies being pushed across the table, people laughing in a good-natured way as he gets up to leave... possibly even have him mumble to himself as he goes.

ELIZA: No. Maybe not.

SABBATH: Good evening.

ELIZA: Hi. Sorry, do I know you?

SABBATH: No. And nor does anybody here seem to know you. Which is curious, for someone with your obvious talent at the card table.

ELIZA: Yeah, well. I did probability theory at school, and everybody else around here still believes in luck.

SABBATH: Then I hope you don't mind if I challenge you. Given that you seem to have established yourself as the mistress of the table, miss...?

ELIZA: Cousins. Eliza Cousins. You do what you like, as long as your money's good. I mean, personally, I don't give a toss about the money. This time next week I'll be out of here, and hopefully I'll never have to see another guinea as long as live. Whatever a guinea is.

SABBATH [sitting down, so possibly the sound of a chair being pulled out]: "Out of here"? Out of where, exactly?

ELIZA: Don't worry about it. You wouldn't understand.

SABBATH: Perhaps not.

DEALER: *New match. If my Lords and Ladies would like to remove all wagers from the table...*

F/X: The background hubbub has died away a little, so either the crowd has drifted off from the table or they're quietening down to watch the new match.

SABBATH: So. A simple game of *vingt-un*, is that right?

ELIZA: Where I come from, we just call it "pontoon". But that's right, yeah.

SABBATH: Then perhaps we could make the game more interesting.

ELIZA: Uh-huh. You're not going to ask me to strip off, are you?

SABBATH: Not immediately. I was thinking of something more... illuminating.

ELIZA: Go on.

SABBATH: These are the rules. Whenever either of us draws a King, the other player has the right to ask a favour. Whenever it's a Queen, the player who drew it has to say the first thing that comes into his or her head. If it's a Knave, the player who drew it owes the opponent a piece of advice.

ELIZA: When you say "a favour" -

SABBATH: Within the limits of polite society, naturally.

ELIZA: Fine. Is that all?

SABBATH: No. If one of us loses a round by drawing cards over twenty-one, then the winner gets to ask the loser one question. The question has to be answered honestly, and without any kind of hesitation. If the losing card was in the suit of Cups, then you have to answer a question about yourself. If it's Swords, then it has to be about your friends. DIks and it's a question about the past, Wands and it has to involve a prediction of the future. Is that acceptable?

ELIZA: So... we're gambling for information.

SABBATH: If you like.

ELIZA: Now, to me, that says you don't have any cash.

F/X: A large amount of money suddenly gets dumped on the table. Apparently in coins.

ELIZA: Ooh, big spender. All right. Just one more thing before we start.

SABBATH: Yes?

ELIZA: Who *are* you, anyway?

SABBATH: I'll tell you, if I like. But then you'd be in debt to me.

ELIZA: I told you *my* name.

SABBATH: True. But I think you lied.

ELIZA: *Touché.* Okay, then don't tell me. I'll get it out of you later.

SABBATH: I look forward to that.

ELIZA: And don't try it on with me, all right? Dealer!

DEALER: *First card.*

3.6

F/X: Another change in tone. There's a big drop in background noise, suggesting that we're moving to the very fringes of the party. The orchestra's a long way away now.

SANDWICH [at a distance]: D'Eon!

F/X: It sounds like Sandwich is hurrying through the crowd to catch up with d'Eon. He's slightly flustered when he speaks.

SANDWICH: D'Eon, where are you going?

D'EON: Down to the cave. To keep an eye on your *other* guest.

SANDWICH: She's staying out of sight. Please, d'Eon. People are talking about what's under the Abbey already. If you suddenly vanish down there, they're going to ask questions.

D'EON: They're already asking questions. Besides, I rather think everyone's attention is on the card table.

SANDWICH: What? Oh. Yes. Who *is* that man, anyway? I'm sure he wasn't on the list of invitations -

D'EON: I should think not. He works for the Service.

SANDWICH: The Service?

D'EON: Your country's intelligence Service.

SANDWICH: You mean... he's a spy? For the government? [**Unsure how to respond to this.**] How do you know?

D'EON: I believe the saying is... it takes one to know one.

3.7

F/X: Back to the card table. Again, the snap of a card being turned over.

ELIZA: Give in yet?

SABBATH: Not after one card, no. Eight of Wands. The Eight represents movement, did you know that?

ELIZA: Says who?

SABBATH: In the Tarot. It means speed. Running.

ELIZA: D'you always do Tarot with playing-cards?

SABBATH: If they were just playing cards, there'd be Hearts instead of Cups and Spades instead of Wands.

F/X: Card turn.

SABBATH: Two of Disks.

ELIZA: And what does *that* mean?

SABBATH: Possibly that I'm at an advantage. Your play.

F/X: Card turn.

SABBATH: *Five* of Wands. Disaster.

ELIZA: Tarot, or just in this game?

SABBATH: Possibly both. You know what I'd say, if I were trying to read your fortune through these cards?

ELIZA: Yeah. You'd say something vague and impressive-sounding.

SABBATH: Not exactly. I'd say you were running away from home.

ELIZA: Really. Seeing as you know I'm new around here, that isn't exactly a big step, is it?

F/X: Card turn.

SABBATH: Eight of Swords. "Interference".

ELIZA: Yours, or mine?.

SABBATH: If you'll pardon the expression, I think *your* cards are already on the table. Eight of Wands, Five of Wands. Collapse. Escape. Cards for a refugee.

ELIZA [long pause... we should get the feeling she's giving him a hard stare]: Dealer? Card.

SABBATH: Are you sure? Thirteen's a dangerous number.

ELIZA: Yeah, I'm sure. You know how I'm sure?

SABBATH: No. Tell me.

ELIZA: You're trying to distract me so that I'll draw another card. But you're doing it so badly that I'm obviously supposed to notice.

SABBATH: A bluff?

ELIZA: A double-bluff.

F/X: Card turn.

ELIZA: Crap.

SABBATH: King of Swords. Twenty-three. I win the round.

F/X: Cards being shuffled in the background.

ELIZA: And you get to ask a question. Happy?

SABBATH: That depends on the answer. A question about your friends, that's what we agreed, I think?

ELIZA: Go ahead.

SABBATH: What happened to Mary Culver?

ELIZA: Who?

SABBATH: You're supposed to be honest.

ELIZA: I am. Who the hell's Mary Culver?

SABBATH: You don't know? Mary Culver. The best-known prostitute and the best-known witch of Medmenham Abbey.

ELIZA: Never heard of her.

SABBATH: Then you don't know what goes on in the cave?

ELIZA: That's another question. I don't have to answer that.

SABBATH: It's a favour. You drew the King, remember. You're under no obligation to grant me the favour, of course, but if you didn't...

ELIZA: Then what?

SABBATH: I'd be immensely disappointed.

ELIZA [theatrical sigh]: Okay. The answer is, no, I don't know what they do in the cave. All I know is, every now and then Sandwich and his friends dress up like a bunch of monks and vanish downstairs for a couple of hours, but seeing as they dress the prostitutes up as nuns at the same time I somehow don't think they're too serious about it, do you?

SABBATH: Oh, rituals are *always* serious.

ELIZA: It's an excuse to dress up and frolic about with some charming eighteenth-century wenches. I don't know what *you* mean by "ritual", but it's not the way we used to do things in the Faction.

SABBATH: Faction?

ELIZA: What, you want another favour now?

SABBATH: Miss Cousins... I do believe you're trying to lead me along.

ELIZA: Next round. Ready?

3.8

F/X: Back over to Sandwich and d'Eon.

SANDWICH: What do you mean, "it takes one to know one"? You said he was a spy, not a *transvesti*.

D'EON: You shouldn't be so surprised, my Lord. Your Order's not as harmless as it was ten years ago. You used to be able to do as you pleased, and the worst that could happen was that you'd shock a few of your London puritans. Things are different now. Now your founder's the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the King's first minister is a -

SANDWICH: That wretched man is *not* one of us!

D'EON: Even so. You have people close to the King, and the Service is sworn to protect His Majesty above all else. Like good little Anglicans. True?

3.9

F/X: Back to the card table. By now a kind of interested whispering is going on in the crowd around the game. The onlookers are nowhere near as raucous as they were when Eliza was playing the Lord. Another card is turned.

SABBATH: Well now. Three of Wands.

ELIZA: Tragedy.

SABBATH: Really? I read it as "virtue".

ELIZA: You've got seventeen. And I've got...

F/X: Card turn.

ELIZA: ...twenty. Beat that.

SABBATH: I think I lose this round.

ELIZA: Well, you could draw another card and hope for the low numbers. But obviously...

SABBATH: ...if I lose, then I have to answer *your* question.

ELIZA: Yep.

F/X: A carefully drawn-out pause from Sabbath. Then he turns another card.

SABBATH: Ten of Cups. "Satisfaction". How ironic.

ELIZA: Cups. That means, what... personal question?

SABBATH: Of course.

ELIZA: Good. Let's start with the basics. Who are you?

SABBATH: Oh, you'll have to be a little more specific.

ELIZA: Then what do I call you?

SABBATH: Sabbath. It's as good a name as any.

ELIZA: That's a coincidence.

SABBATH: Really?

ELIZA: I used to have a Godfather called Sabbath. Didn't look much like you, though. Wait a minute... you did that deliberately, didn't you?

SABBATH: Did what?

ELIZA: Drew an extra card. Even though you knew it'd just lose you the round.

SABBATH: You think I'm *trying* to give you information?

ELIZA: Maybe just what you want me to have.

SABBATH: That's the nature of the game. New round, dealer.

F/X: Cards being shuffled again.

SABBATH: Eighteenth-century wench, that's what you said. Suggesting that you're familiar with another kind.

ELIZA: Maybe I just know a lot about wench.

DEALER: *New round.*

F/X: Card turn.

SABBATH: Queen of Wands. What's the first thing that comes into your head?

ELIZA: What?

SABBATH: Tell me. Now.

ELIZA: What do you mean, the -

SABBATH: How long have you worked for Faction Paradox?

ELIZA [pause]: Blood.

SABBATH: Blood?

ELIZA: The first thing that comes into my head. Blood. Spread out on a big patch of snow in the middle of Portsmouth docks. How do you know about Faction Paradox, anyway?

SABBATH: Let's just say my employers have had dealings with your people before.

ELIZA: That's not much help.

SABBATH: No. Free information never is.

F/X: Card turn.

3.10

F/X: Back over to Sandwich and d'Eon.

SANDWICH: They wouldn't dare... I mean, the Service wouldn't try anything, would they? We're too well-connected...

D'EON: Under British law, I believe your Order's technically illegal. Various moral codes. Several counts of blasphemy.

SANDWICH: For Heaven's sake, we're not *serious* about that sort of thing. It's just a joke!

D'EON: Oh? And what about our "visitors"? Are *they* a joke? **[No reply from SANDWICH.]** I'll be in the cave, Lord Sandwich. Please feel free to alert me if there's any... incident. **[Fades out as d'Eon moves off.]**

SANDWICH [to himself]: Government intelligence...

3.11

F/X: Back to the card table. Card turn.

SABBATH: Another twenty. Probability *is* on your side.

ELIZA: I'm sick of playing games. Let's just play the game instead.

SABBATH: Well-put. **[Another calculated pause.]** Another draw, I think.

F/X: Card turn.

SABBATH: The Knave of Cups. My favourite card.

ELIZA: Hah! Twenty-two. Bust.

SABBATH: I owe you an answer, then. And a piece of advice.

ELIZA: I don't need your advice. I'll ask you a question, though.

SABBATH: Go ahead.

ELIZA: What's the name of this "employer" of yours? **[No reply.]** No hesitating! You said no hesitating!

SABBATH: Oh, I know.

F/X: A chair being pulled back. Sabbath is rising from the table.

ELIZA: What are you doing?

SABBATH: It seems I'm forfeiting the match. The stakes are yours.

F/X: Large amounts of cash being pushed across the table towards Eliza.

ELIZA: Wait a minute! You can't just walk away!

SABBATH: I still owe you a piece of advice. So here it is. I'm not sure how much you know about this place, or how much you've been told about what goes on here. But you might ask your friend the Earl of Sandwich about Mary Culver. About the marks on the floor of the cave.

ELIZA: What?

SABBATH: That's all, Miss... *Cousin Eliza.* **[Moving away.]** I'm fairly confident that we'll be meeting again.

F/X: Some excitement from the crowd as Sabbath leaves. There's an upsurge in the whispering.

ELIZA: Y'know, he's got a great way of making you feel like you lost.

F/X: Chair being pulled back. Eliza rising from the table.

ELIZA: Excuse me, all.

F/X: Sandwich makes his way across the hall, so there's a gradual change in the tone of the background noise. If possible, we should get the feeling that he's squeezing his way between the guests.

SANDWICH: ...excuse me... oh, pardon me...

F/X: Judging by the background, he's close to the card table.

SANDWICH [calling out]: Eliza! Mistress Eliza...

LADY: Lord Sandwich!

SANDWICH: Oh, no. I mean... er...

LADY [oblivious]: Your mysterious young lady hasn't even taken her winnings from the table. How terribly cavalier of her.

SANDWICH: Yes. Yes, I'm sure. Please, if you'll excuse me I have to find, er... **[Vanishes into the crowd with a mumble.]**

LADY [to herself]: *Most intriguing.*

SABBATH: My Lady.

LADY: Oh! So, we meet again, my Lord.

SABBATH: I'm hardly a Lord, my Lady. Tell me... did you happen to see where the Sieur d'Eon went?

3.13

F/X: Another change in tone... followed by the sound of a door closing, after which the party background becomes very quiet and very muffled indeed. The implication is that we've followed Sandwich into another part of the building, and that he's closed the door behind him. This new area is

far more peaceful, so even over the hubbub of the partygoers we can hear the faint sound of rainfall. (The idea is that we're in a kind of conservatory, with windows looking out onto a garden and with rain spattering against the glass, so even if it's not possible to *exactly* suggest this we should at least get the feeling we're on the "edges" of the building.) Nobody seems to be present except for the two main characters.

SANDWICH: Mistress Eliza?

F/X: It takes her a few moments to answer, in which time the rain continues to pitter-pat against the windows.

ELIZA: I like the garden.

SANDWICH: Ahh... yes. Dashwood designed it when he had this place built. It's not exactly delicate, but -

ELIZA: The rose bushes.

SANDWICH: The rose bushes?

ELIZA: They've been planted in the shape of a giant cock.

SANDWICH [unsure how to respond to that]: Yes. I suppose they have. Very much in keeping with the nature of the Order, I'm afraid. The power of the priapic influences, and... well... **[Awkward silence.]** ...if there's something wrong...?

ELIZA: Why are we here, Sandwich?

SANDWICH: In the classroom...?

ELIZA: Why are we *here*?

SANDWICH: You said you needed sanctuary -

ELIZA: Yeah, we did, didn't we? Y'see, Justine brought us to this century 'cos she said there were people here who'd know us. She said the Faction's come this way before, and it looks like she was right.

SANDWICH: That's how things are, with the Order of Saint Francis. Remarkable people are just attracted to the Abbey, I suppose. I remember, after I came back from the Turkish Empire -

ELIZA: And what do you know about it?

SANDWICH: I'm sorry?

ELIZA: About the Order. You're not even part of the inner circle. You're just following orders, aren't you?

SANDWICH: Mistress Eliza! I'd thank you to remember that in Mr. Dashwood's absence I'm responsible for this estate, and while you're on his property -

ELIZA: And does he let you in on everything, your Mr. Dashwood? Your Mr. Chancellor? What about that slogan over your front door? "Do as you wish", isn't that the idea?

SANDWICH: Just a joke. A way of irritating the moralists -

ELIZA: And what about that cave?

SANDWICH: The cave?

ELIZA: Who was Mary Culver, Sandwich?

SANDWICH [brief stunned silence]: You... have me at a disadvantage.

ELIZA [sounds like she's starting to get angry, although she holds it in]: Let me tell you something. When we got to this century, we didn't

know where we were supposed to be going. We didn't know about you and your "Order". Our ship turned up in Portsmouth. Hovering in mid-air, twenty yards off the coast.

SANDWICH: It's how your people came here last time. There was a secret reception at Portsmouth harbour. Half the Board of Admiralty was there, and -

ELIZA: Yeah, but your country wasn't in the middle of a war then, was it? Freezing cold night. Frost everywhere. Half the local population already tanked up to their eyeballs. A whole bunch of sailors sitting there on the shore, waiting for the French or the Spanish or anyone else they don't like the look of, and we turn up out of thin air like some bloody flying Armada. You know what happened?

SANDWICH: Justine said you'd had some trouble...

ELIZA: We had to *fight*. You know what it means, when you're using shadow-weaponry at close quarters? It means people are going to get killed.

SANDWICH: Shadow-weaponry...?

ELIZA: We *slaughtered* our way out of that harbour. Got back to the ship, moved it somewhere safer, didn't think twice about it. You understand me? We've already started killing people here. Not Sontarans, not robots, not enemy agents. Bystanders. They might've been my ancestors, if this was a slightly different universe.

SANDWICH [floundering]: But surely, an organisation like yours... you should be used to a given amount of, of...

ELIZA: Bloodshed? Oh, yeah. But that was *before*. That was back when we joined up, that was when we were desperate and we didn't care and we didn't have anything better to do. Me, I thought it was going to be like signing up to work for an evil criminal mastermind. I thought there

were going to be secret volcano bases and armies of ninjas with machine-guns. **[Pause.]** And you know what? I was right, for a while.

SANDWICH: I'm sorry. I don't understand.

ELIZA [calming down a little]: Ever since the Eleven-Day Empire got eaten... we're not just footsoldiers any more, that's all. Now *Justine's* the one giving the orders, and she's telling me to cut people to pieces whenever they get in my way. Which is why I'm asking you, Sandwich. What's really behind this? Why's your precious Order so happy to let us stay here?

SANDWICH [deflating]: It... this wasn't what I thought it'd be like.

ELIZA: Meaning?

SANDWICH: The way Dashwood always talked about the Order... he never took it seriously. He never did anything *bad*, I'm sure. I mean, he's a bit of a monster, I know. Dressing the prostitutes up like nuns, keeping that great hairy ape in the basement and treating it like it's some kind of devil...

ELIZA: But it's changed now, hasn't it? It's not a joke any more, is it?

SANDWICH: I don't know. I really don't. Ever since our friends started getting into the government... and now *you* people...

ELIZA: I'm going to ask you once more time. Who was Mary Culver?

F/X: A silence from Sandwich. Pitter-patter, pitter-patter.

SANDWICH: I can't tell you that.

F/X: Suddenly there's the *whoosh* of Eliza's shadow-weapon (as in Volumes 1-2). It ends in the shattering of glass. The sound of rainfall immediately grows louder, so obviously Eliza's just smashed one of the windows.

SANDWICH: Mistress Eliza!

F/X: More *whooshes*, Eliza randomly lashing out with her weapon. More windows are shattered. The rain gets louder every time.

SANDWICH: Mistress Eliza, *please!*

F/X: Yet more shadow-strikes. This time there's a variety of wooden splintering sounds, as Eliza starts to take the furnishings to pieces. (N.B. The party noise in the dim background doesn't change, so nobody else in the building is taking any notice of this yet.)

ELIZA: Please what?

SANDWICH: The glassroom -

ELIZA: I can take people apart with my bare shadow. You understand that? Look at it, Sandwich. *Look* at it.

SANDWICH: Stop it!

ELIZA: Why?

F/X: Yet more splintering and cracking, more violent than ever. There can't be much left of the room by now. It carries on through Eliza's next speech.

ELIZA: Why stop? I've killed people, remember? *People*. Right here, right now.

SANDWICH: I don't *understand...*

F/X: Finally, the vandalism ends. There's nothing but rain and distant party noise. When she speaks again, Eliza sounds quite calm.

ELIZA: No. Of course you don't.

F/X: Eliza walks away. We can just hear her footsteps on broken glass.

SANDWICH: Please!

F/X: The footsteps end in the tinkling of falling glass shards. (The idea is that she's stepping out through the broken window.)

SANDWICH [calls out]: Where are you going?

ELIZA [into the distance]: Out for a walk.

3.14

F/X: Fade into... the sound of the garden outside. We can barely hear the noise of the party now, but the rainfall is all around us. Possibly we can also hear Eliza's feet as she walks across the grass, and Sandwich hurrying after her.

SANDWICH [catching up with her]: I gave Dashwood my word. I said I'd make sure no harm came to you.

ELIZA [flatly]: Well, I'm grateful.

SANDWICH: I only mean... you should stay inside the Abbey.

F/X: The footsteps suddenly stop.

SANDWICH: What's wrong?

ELIZA: There's someone out here.

SANDWICH: Pardon?

ELIZA: Can't you feel them?

SANDWICH: Why would anybody...?

F/X: Vague rustling noises? Something moving in the undergrowth?

ELIZA [calling out]: I know you're there. You might as well show yourselves.

F/X: Nothing. The rustling's stopped.

ELIZA [calling out]: Let me explain something. You might not believe this, but I'm armed and I'm dangerous and if I hadn't been biologically modified then it'd probably be my time of the month, so if you don't come out now then I'm taking the bushes apart and frankly I'll probably enjoy the mindless damage. Clear?

SANDWICH: They're Dashwood's bushes -

ELIZA: Shh. **[Calling out.]** I'm going to start cutting now.

F/X: There's a pause. Then the rustling begins again. This time, though, it's not just a vague impression: it comes from all around, i.e. from all over the stereo picture. Ominous atmosphere as shapes come out from the undergrowth at all angles and step into view over the wet grass.

SANDWICH [clearly nervous]: Eliza -

ELIZA: Yeah, I know. To be honest with you, if I'd known there were *that* many I might have kept my mouth shut.

SANDWICH: Their faces...

ELIZA: They're wearing masks.

F/X: The rustling ends, as the last of the figures steps into view. Then there's a gentle clicking noise. It's followed by more clicking noises, from some of the others. Muskets being cocked.

ELIZA: Guns...?

SANDWICH [to the figures]: It's all right! I'm a peer of the realm!

F/X: A few more guns are cocked.

ELIZA: They don't look very impressed, do they?

SOLDIER [shouts]: Neither of you move. You're under arrest.

ELIZA [fed up rather than scared]: All right. Let's do this the *loud* way.

3.15

F/X: The background changes tone. Although we're still outside, and we can still hear the sound of rainfall, the music from the soirée is louder and we get the impression we're closer to the building. We hear wet footsteps on the ground, somebody breathing heavily in the cold air... and then the footsteps abruptly change. They're no longer walking on grass, but on rock. The background noise fades, both music and rainfall, and suddenly there's a distinct echo in the air. It's as if we've just moved into a cave, or possibly a cavern tunnel. The footsteps move a little way into the cave, and then - suddenly - come the gunshots. Two of them. They're muffled, and obviously come from outside the cave. The footsteps immediately stop.

D'EON: Gunshots...

SABBATH [from a short distance behind him, so echo on voice]:
Sieur.

D'EON: Monsieur. Do I take it that you've been following me?

SABBATH [getting closer]: Of course. You know me?

D'EON: I know you work for the Service. You move like a spy.

SABBATH: Coming from you, *Sieur*, I'm sure that's a compliment. Although I'm afraid I don't have your degree of grace. This is the entrance to your secret cave, I presume?

D'EON: There's nothing down here for you.

SABBATH: Oh, come now, *Sieur*. You know how well they train us. These days, you can't be a spy without being a mystic. You studied under the Count Saint-Germain, isn't that true?

D'EON: For a while. Until he began claiming that he was over a thousand years old.

SABBATH: Not terribly convincing.

D'EON: Certainly not. The previous week he'd only claimed to be three-hundred. I found the lack of consistency annoying.

F/X: Again, shots from somewhere outside the cave.

D'EON: More gunshots. Your people?

SABBATH: I'm afraid so. The Service has had this establishment watched for some time.

D'EON: Pardon me, *monsieur*, but it doesn't sound like your friends are *watching*.

SABBATH: No. Something must have startled them. The Service Arcanum Section isn't very subtle, I'm afraid.

F/X: The unmistakable sound of a sabre being drawn from its scabbard.

SABBATH: Ah.

D'EON: If your people are prepared to draw arms, monsieur, then so am I.

F/X: From somewhere along the cave tunnel, behind Sabbath, footsteps are approaching. Although the footsteps echo on the rock they're quiet at first, so not even d'Eon notices them straight away.

SABBATH: I'm unarmed, Sieur. Besides which, I'm hardly going to take issue with a master swordsman like yourself. Or a mistress swordswoman.

F/X: The footsteps grow closer. Boots on rock, maybe half a dozen men moving down the passage. As they approach Sabbath and d'Eon they draw to a halt, and the clicking of muskets echoes around the cavern passage.

SABBATH: And I'm afraid I already have numbers on my side.

D'EON: An army...

SABBATH: My superiors were a little wary of coming here without a sizeable force. I congratulate you, Sieur. You and your associates have quite a reputation.

Fade.

3.16

F/X: Back outside. The rain continues to fall, but it's drowned out by the sound of Eliza's shadow-weapon, rapidly swinging back and forth at the attacking men. There are muffled shouts of alarm from all around as she fights them off.

SANDWICH: Eliza, please. These men work for the *government* -

F/X: A gunshot from one of the men. It's quickly followed by another strike from Eliza, and a shriek of pain from the man.

ELIZA: I thought your friends *were* the government now?

SANDWICH: Well... a few of them, yes, but... Eliza, you're *killing* them.

F/X: The shadow-strikes end. The panicked sounds of the men continue, although they seem to be retreating.

ELIZA: Only a couple. Be glad Justine isn't out here, you'd be up to your neck in severed heads. [**Slight pause.**] That didn't sound right, did it?

F/X: The click of another musket being cocked.

ELIZA: Oh no you don't.

F/X: Another shadow-strike. A body hits the wet ground. Then things calm down, the other men retreating into the distance. In the relative calm Eliza gets the chance to take stock.

ELIZA: Those masks they're wearing. What do they need to cover their faces for?

SANDWICH: They're the Service's special forces. Eliza, you have to listen -

F/X: Another gunshot, but this one comes from some distance away. In the far background there are shrieks of panic, this time most of them female. If it was possible to hear the orchestra before then they've definitely stopped playing now.

SANDWICH: The Abbey -

ELIZA: There must be more of them. Come on.

SANDWICH: But -

ELIZA: Come *on*.

F/X: Eliza running across the grass.

ELIZA [to herself]: Just once... just *once*... I'd like to go somewhere where people *aren't* trying to kill everyone I know.

Fade.

3.17

F/X: Cave passage, with the appropriate echo. Maybe there's the occasional gunshot from outside, but it's largely calm down here.

D'EON: So. I'm to be executed as a spy, is that your intention?

SABBATH: Actually, my intention was to survey the Abbey and report on your guests. If it's any consolation, I apologise for all of this. I didn't want to involve the military at all.

D'EON: Yet they seem to have given you the advantage, monsieur.

SABBATH: It's a poor man who has to back up his intentions with brute force. Sadly, they're following my superior's orders, not mine.

D'EON: I see. You can't call of your dogs.

SABBATH: This is why I prefer to work alone.

D'EON: I claim my rights as a citizen of France and an envoy of King Louis the Fifteenth. I'm in this country to assist in negotiating a peace. By arresting me and insulting my associates, you're jeopardising the treaty.

SABBATH: I know. This is a ridiculous strategy, I agree. But I think we've reached the point of no return.

F/X: Throughout Sabbath's speech, there's the sound of a single pair of footsteps approaching from the *other* direction (i.e. from further down the passage). The footsteps stop as the new arrival speaks.

JUSTINE: You're quite right.

F/X: A moment's confusion from Sabbath's armed men. More clicking of guns.

SABBATH: You must be Mistress Justine. *Cousin* Justine. I was just coming to introduce myself.

JUSTINE: The cave is off-limits to you, sir. I'm afraid this is as far as I can let you go.

D'EON: Justine -

SABBATH: I'm aware that you must be a capable woman, Cousin. The weapons of your Faction... the *sombras que corta*, am I right?

D'EON: I'm sorry?

JUSTINE: The shadows that cut. You know a great deal, sir.

SABBATH: A little. But just in this passage alone, there are half a dozen guns already aimed at your head. Forgive me, but I don't think even *you* could bring down these "gentlemen" before one of them pulls the trigger.

JUSTINE: You're a tactician?

SABBATH: It's part of my training, yes.

JUSTINE: Then I bow to your wisdom. However, there is an aspect of strategy that you've overlooked.

SABBATH: Which is?

F/X: From all around, a new sound begins to build. It's not unlike the noise made by a typical shadow-weapon, but rather than being a quick, single cut it's long and drawn-out... and shows no sign of ending. The sound becomes louder throughout the next few lines, almost giving it the feel of a bleeding great underground train coming down the tunnel.

JUSTINE: One should never fight on the opponent's home territory.

D'EON: The walls -

JUSTINE: I suggest you leave now, d'Eon.

F/X: Footsteps on the rock. Possibly d'Eon's, but some of the armed men might making a quick exit too. If they are, then the footsteps are soon drowned out by the noise, which is rapidly blotting out all other sound. We can hear the men begin to mutter amongst themselves, trying not to panic, before the screeching, slicing noise blots them out. However, when Justine speaks she somehow doesn't have to raise her voice to be heard.

JUSTINE: This is a cave, sir. This is a *place* of shadows.

SABBATH [not panicking at all]: Yes. I see.

F/X: It's the last thing we hear before the noise takes over the entire scene. Then a quick fade to...

3.18

F/X: Inside the Abbey building. The background noise of the party has turned into the panicked sound of lots and lots of people trying to work out

where the exits are. There's the occasional shriek from the crowd, plus tables being overturned and people attempting to make their escape.

SOLDIER [shouting over the panic]: *There-will-be-order-here.* By the authority of His Majesty King George, and in the name of his law, all those present are under arrest. The charges are sedition, blasphemy and lewd conduct. Is that understood?

F/X: A change in the tone of the noise, as we quickly move to another part of the hall.

SANDWICH [trying to make himself heard, but failing]: Please... everybody, listen to me! It's all a misunderstanding...

F/X: A crashing, tearing sound from nearby. The soldiers are not only turning over the furnishings, they're positively wrecking the place.

SANDWICH: No! Please!

F/X: More crashes and tinkles. Glass being broken.

SANDWICH: This isn't my furniture!

F/X: In the foreground, the sound of someone pushing over a particularly large piece of furniture.

ELIZA [calm]: Hey.

SOLDIER: What...?

ELIZA: I think you'll find *I'm* in charge of the card table.

F/X: Sudden shadow-weapon strike. The sound brings the scene to an abrupt end, and immediately we're back to...

F/X: Cave interior. The howling, screeching sound still fills the air - as the entire cave passage turns into one giant shadow-weapon - but we can at least hear voices over the din. Alarmed shouts from the armed men in the background.

SABBATH: And I assume that *you're* in control of all this?

JUSTINE: As I said, this is a place of shadows. Shadows and I have a certain -

F/X: A sudden surge in the noise. It's as if the tunnel's spontaneously growing a limb and then lashing out with it. There's a brief yell of agony from one of the soldiers.

JUSTINE: - affinity.

SABBATH: Evidently.

F/X: The din begins to fade, but the sounds of the armed men are fading as well, vanishing into the distance. The battle's clearly over.

JUSTINE: There. I believe I've made my point.

SABBATH: Half of them down, the other half running for their lives. I'm impressed. I assume I'm to be spared?

F/X: The sound has more or less disappeared by now.

JUSTINE: You say you have superiors. I think a message should be sent to them.

SABBATH: Of course. And what would you like me to report?

JUSTINE: That the Order of Saint Francis is just a group of dilettantes and wenchers. That myself and my companion have been granted sanctuary

here, but have no interest in involving ourselves in your politics.

SABBATH: And the rumours? The diabolism in the cave? The human sacrifice?

JUSTINE: Rumours. The only sacrifices here were those made by your men. Please, I know the British government is aware of Faction Paradox. I'm sure King George won't wish to risk a war with the Eleven-Day Empire. The war with France must be difficult enough.

SABBATH: And supposing I said that the Eleven-Day Empire no longer exists? **[Silence from Justine.]** Yes. That's what I thought. The Eight and the Five of Swords.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry. I don't think I understand you.

SABBATH: No home to call your own, and nothing left to do but wander. Very well, Cousin Justine. I'll pass on your message. But I'll tell you this much. While the Order *was* just a group of harmless dabblers, the Service would never have taken any notice. But while there's an alliance with people such as yourself...

JUSTINE: There is no alliance. We're merely guests here.

SABBATH: So you say. But you'll have difficulty telling the rest of the Arcanum Section that.

JUSTINE: They're attacking the Abbey, I take it?

SABBATH: And the Abbey is *not* a place of shadows. Can you deal with *them* so easily?

F/X: Justine pauses. In that pause, we hear a couple of muted gunshots from outside the cave.

JUSTINE: Yes. I believe I can. Don't let me detain you, sir.

Fade.

3.20

F/X: Back inside the building, the guests are still in disarray. The occasional gunshot can be heard.

ELIZA: Sandwich! **[No response at first.]** Sandwich! Get down over here!

SANDWICH [arriving, out of breath]: This is a nightmare. A living nightmare.

ELIZA: Yeah. They shot one of the violinists, y'know.

SANDWICH: That... *weapon* of yours...

ELIZA: They're wise to it now. As soon as I break cover, they'll have my head off before I can use it. **[Deep breath.]** Right. I'm going to make a run for the classroom. Follow me if you feel like it.

SANDWICH: Well... I suppose...

ELIZA: Three... two... one...

F/X: Another gunshot. Very, very close.

ELIZA: *Ow!* Bloody *ow!*

SANDWICH: Eliza!

ELIZA: He shot me! The bastard shot me in the -

F/X: Eliza suddenly becomes aware of a noise, which begins during her previous line and is now slowly building. It's recognisably the same sound

we heard in the cavern tunnel, Justine manipulating the shadows, except... now it sounds muffled, curiously *deep*, as if it were pounding through the ground instead of filling the air.

ELIZA: ...what on Earth...?

F/X: The noise continues to build, causing even much concern in the hall. We should get the feeling that the ground's shaking.

SANDWICH: The window! There! Outside the window!

LADY [panicked, crying out]: Lord Sandwich!

F/X: In the background, the shadow-sound is compounded by a tearing, ripping noise. The ground is opening up. It's some distance away, though, so the noise isn't in the foreground.

LADY: Lord Sandwich! What's going on? I don't understand -

ELIZA [still in pain]: Bit *too* exciting now, is it?

LADY: That thing outside... coming out of the ground...

SANDWICH: Good God.

ELIZA: Really messing up the lawn. Your Mr. Dashwood's not going to be happy.

F/X: More of the tearing noise. Now everybody in the building is panicking, armed men included. The sound becomes more distinct as something very large pulls itself up out of the ground outside the window. Soon, more tearing noises follow the first.

SANDWICH: It's like... a tentacle. Like some kind of octopus...

LADY: It's black! It's so *black*...

SANDWICH: There's more of them! There's -

F/X: A window shatters. Quite possibly more than one. The shadow-noise becomes more distinct as these “tentacles” burst their way into the building. The armed men immediately open fire.

ELIZA: I don't think shooting them's going to do any good.

SANDWICH: What *are* they?

F/X: The next voice we hear is huge and echoey, and apparently comes from the same hole in the ground that’s spawning the tentacles. It fills the entire building and shakes the walls. Everybody present falls silent as it speaks.

JUSTINE [God-voice]: Ladies. Gentlemen. Good evening.

ELIZA: Justine.

SANDWICH: What? Where?

ELIZA: Sounds like it's coming up from under the ground.

SANDWICH: The cave...

JUSTINE [God-voice]: I apologise to those of you who were invited here. This must be very distressing, I'm sure. However, my only complaint is with the masked gentlemen who seem to have invaded our privacy.

ELIZA: *Now* there's going to be trouble.

JUSTINE [God-voice]: I'd like to request that these gentlemen remove themselves from the premises at once.

LADY: A creature. Some monstrous leviathan, living under the earth...

ELIZA: The timeship.

SANDWICH/ LADY: What?

ELIZA: Justine hid our timeship in the cave. She must be telling it to reach up out of the ground.

SANDWICH: Your... transport? It's some kind of *monster*....?

ELIZA: It is now.

JUSTINE [God-voice]: Gentlemen, please. Leave us in peace. I'm sure you'll agree, it's the only wise move.

F/X: There's a pause, in which the only noise is the shadow-sound. Then a gunshot. More gunshots follow, other soldiers taking their lead from the first.

JUSTINE [God-voice]: Very well.

ELIZA: Duck.

SANDWICH: Pardon?

F/X: Bloody great crashing, crunching, thrashing, splintering, rending sound. One of the huge tentacles smashing through the side of the Abbey, destroying the remnants of the windows and sweeping into the building. Some gunfire, and some anguished cries on top of it.

SANDWICH: The tentacles -

ELIZA: Keep down. She's only going for the soldiers.

SANDWICH: But she's taking the building apart!

ELIZA: Just get your head down, all right?

F/X: The great noise continues, and although the gunshots drop away the cries of the soldiers become a lot more common. Basically we reach a crescendo of horrible violence, which only ends when we quickly fade to..

3.21

F/X: Outside. The rain still falling. The uber-noise continues, but it's a lot quieter, so evidently we're "seeing" things from the point of view of someone standing a fair distance from the building itself. Finally, the watcher speaks.

SABBATH: Interesting.

F/X: A new sound overlays the hideous background noise, this one less impressive but a lot closer. Horses' hooves are approaching along a road.

SABBATH: Ah. My carriage awaits.

F/X: The hooves clatter to a halt. The carriage has drawn up right next to Sabbath. Throughout the following exchange the tentacled-horror-sound continues in the background, but it's no longer the focus of things.

BUTE: Sabbath!

SABBATH: Good evening, sir. It's not often we see *you* so close to the battlefield.

BUTE: That... *monstrosity*. What in the name of God...?

SABBATH: Faction Paradox.

BUTE [a moment's shocked pause]: Faction Paradox? Here? Now?

SABBATH: So it seems.

BUTE: The Court won't be pleased. With everything else that's happening... **[changing tack]** ...come and see me tomorrow. Once you've made your full report to the Star Chamber.

SABBATH: Of course. Naturally, it won't exactly be favourable...

BUTE: What? What do you mean?

SABBATH: I could have infiltrated the cave. Instead, your Arcanum Section started a riot and for the most part got themselves killed. Furthermore, the Order now believes we've declared war against its members. Sir.

BUTE: It wasn't planned that way, and you know it! The commander's already briefed me. The men were spotted. The Order started this fight.

SABBATH: Your men were *spotted* carrying loaded muskets on the private property of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

BUTE: They had to be armed! The sort of things that might have been going on in there...

SABBATH: And do "we" intend taking any further action against the Order? I ask just so I know when to start digging the mass grave.

BUTE [wavering]: No. No, we've done enough harm. We'll try to cover our tracks.

SABBATH: That shouldn't be difficult. Except, perhaps, for the fact that the grounds are now littered with corpses wearing Service insignia.

BUTE [warningly]: Tomorrow, Sabbath.

F/X: With a crack of the whip, the carriage sets off again. As the horses' hooves moves away, the shadow-noise becomes the centre of

attention again.

SABBATH: Naturally. Tomorrow.

Fade.

3.22

F/X: Fade in to the sounds of calm and tranquility. The morning after the battle, presumably. Birds faintly chirrup away in the background, although we can hear the occasional shuffling of somebody moving through debris so we're probably inside the damaged Abbey building. The general sounds of people clearing up the mess.

SANDWICH [to himself]: Dear Lord. Dear, dear Lord.

D'EON: I've found another one.

SANDWICH: I beg your pardon?

D'EON: Another one of the Servicemen. I believe his neck was broken. So far that's eight Servicemen dead, one guest and one musician, not to mention the wounded. Cousin Eliza amongst them, although she should be well enough by this evening. I did try to warn you, my Lord.

SANDWICH: D'Eon, please! I was *told* to hold this... gathering. I didn't have a choice.

D'EON: Told by whom? By Dashwood?

SANDWICH: We were supposed to make a statement. To show society that... that the Order was still going strong. It was *political*.

D'EON: You've made an enemy of your Service and your King. I'd certainly call that political.

SANDWICH [doesn't immediately reply]: You saw it. The thing. Coming up out of the ground.

D'EON: Oh yes. Cousin Justine's miraculous carriage.

SANDWICH: Dear God, d'Eon. What have we allied ourselves with?

D'EON: Faction Paradox. And now the Royal Court must know it.

SANDWICH: The King? You really think he knows about -

D'EON: An organisation like the Faction can't pass through the world without being noticed. Britain made a deal with Faction Paradox once before, I think. A state secret, of course. The Court officially regards the Faction as a foreign power, which means Justine and Eliza are *agents* of a foreign power.

SANDWICH: You mean, the Court's going to treat them as spies?

JUSTINE [in the background]: Then we'll have to be introduced.

SANDWICH: What?

JUSTINE [getting closer]: It's customary, I believe, for foreign dignitaries to introduce themselves at Court.

D'EON: True. At one of the King's levees. St. James's Palace. In general only men are permitted to attend, but in the case of an ambassadress...

SANDWICH: You can't be serious. The King's a traditionalist, he'll never let a woman even set foot in the room.

D'EON: Tradition has its limits. Gender's such an imprecise quality, these days.

JUSTINE: So I'd noticed.

D'EON [trying to ignore this]: These are changing times, and the Court recognises it. Even Russia has an Empress now. And people say *she's* a witch, as well.

JUSTINE: I agree. The King's aware of our existence. We may as well make our presence known.

SANDWICH: Do you know what you're saying? You've killed government Servicemen!

JUSTINE: Whose existence is an official secret, even under normal circumstances. And these are *not* normal circumstances.

SANDWICH: And what about our friends in the government? What are *they* going to make of this? I'm supposed to be the new ambassador to Spain next year, how am I going to present myself after you've -

JUSTINE: I believe the decision has to be mine, my Lord. I'd best prepare for the journey to London.

F/X: We hear her feet on the debris-covered floor as she moves away, crunching on the glass and splinters. Then she pauses.

JUSTINE [from a slight distance]: It's strange. I was taught the history of this century long before I joined Faction Paradox. This was never quite the way I imagined it.

F/X: She moves off.

Fade.

F/X: New setting. We're in a room, possibly a hall, and there's a deeply *reverential* feel to the place: it doesn't sound big enough to be a church, but there's a whispering in the air, or maybe even a muttering. It's the sound of at least a dozen people quietly reciting some kind of prayer, not necessarily all in synch. It isn't exactly like the chanting of monks, but it does feel very Catholic, with a tangible hush in the chamber which leaves us in no doubt that there are going to be candles involved. After a few moments the background noise is interrupted by a knocking, three loud thumps on wood. Those present don't stop praying. The knocking is soon followed by the sound of a door opening at the back of the chamber.

SABBATH [going through the motions, and not too seriously]: I stand before the door of the temple, and ask to be received. I put my faith in the Trinity and ask for remission.

BUTE [wearily]: Come in, Sabbath.

F/X: Sabbath approaches along the hall, his feet echoing on the floor. Still the whispering goes on.

BUTE: I suppose there'd be no use in asking you to join the litany?

SABBATH: I don't think I'm a worthy penitent, do you, sir?

BUTE: Might I remind you, Sabbath, that when you joined the Service you didn't just pledge yourself to the country. You pledged yourself to the King. And that means allegiance to the King's Church.

SABBATH: Really? That's strange. This hardly looks like a *Protestant* congregation. Are you sure the King would approve?

BUTE: No Serviceman can neglect his duty to God. Don't be flippant. **[Lowering his voice somewhat.]** Supposing I mentioned the Supplication of the Anakim. Would *that* mean anything to you?

SABBATH: It's a ceremonial rite. I've heard of it.

BUTE: What do you know?

SABBATH: Not much. I know its earliest suspected use was in pre-Christian Ethiopia. I know it was a major influence on the seventeenth-century Enochian movements and quite possibly on the spirit-religions in the French West Indies. I know it's a piece of ritual summoning that nobody seriously expects to work, although it does have elements in common with the techniques we know to be used by Faction Paradox. Why? Is it important? **[Yes, he's taking the piss.]**

BUTE: Look. Look at this.

SABBATH [slight pause]: A piece of glass?

BUTE: It belonged to the Earl of Sandwich. We recovered it from the Abbey at Medmenham.

SABBATH: A broken piece of glass? "Recovered"?

BUTE: Sandwich kept it in a box in the Abbey's repository. A *locked* box.

SABBATH: Ah. You mean, one of your men stole the box in the confusion and you found *this* inside.

BUTE [determined not to rise to him]: There's blood along one edge.

SABBATH: Yes. And the Supplication of the Anakim demands that the supplicant cuts his or her own throat open, with a piece of glass that's been "baptised" in four specific elements. Isn't that right?

BUTE: You know what the ritual does?

SABBATH: In theory. It opens up the body and allows the victim to become a vessel for certain... outside influences.

BUTE: It's nonsense, of course.

SABBATH: Of course. *Anybody* who practices complicated occult rituals must be deluded. Incidentally, sir, how *is* your career as a Freemason doing?

BUTE: You're trying my patience, Sabbath. The point is, we know that the Order of Saint Francis has been practising this kind of rite ever since it was founded. But we don't think they ever expected the rituals to *work*.

SABBATH: Except that now Faction Paradox is involved. And whatever the Faction really *is*, occult ceremonies tend to have surprising results when its agents are in the vicinity.

BUTE: Also, there are... other factors.

SABBATH: You mean, the King's new allies?

BUTE [pauses]: There's such a thing as knowing too much, Sabbath. What have you heard?

SABBATH: Only rumours.

BUTE: Not from the public...?

SABBATH: Of course not. The public's mind is on other things.

BUTE: Such as...?

SABBATH: The war. The birth of the Prince. The King's own personal problems.

BUTE: Personal problems?

SABBATH: Oh, you know the mood of the nation, sir. They say the King's little more than a naive boy, being controlled by his wicked and debauched first minister. The usual tittle-tattle.

BUTE [trying not to lose his temper]: Sabbath... please remember, as long as we're in this room I'm your superior in the Service. While I'm wearing this mask, I am *not* the King's first minister. And I'd appreciate it if you didn't try to goad me.

SABBATH: Of course. Sir.

BUTE [regaining his posture]: These are your instructions. Find out what the Order knows about the Supplication ritual. Find out if it relates to these Faction Paradox people. Find out if it's got anything to do with what happened at Portsmouth. What are you doing with that?

SABBATH: You don't mind if I take the glass with me? You never know when it might be useful.

BUTE: Do what you like with it. It's only a piece of glass. Just get results.

SABBATH: And would you like me to track Cousin Justine?

BUTE: I'll deal with that myself. It seems she's ready to come out into the open.

SABBATH: Oh...?

Fade.

3.24

F/X: The King's Levee. Essentially it's just another gathering, with several dozen people milling around in groups and mumbling to each other, although here things are far more subdued than at Sandwich's party. There's

no music, and little or no laughter, so it's all very formal. Nonetheless, as with the soirée we begin to make out words in the overall background noise. This time it's Bute who comes to our attention.

BUTE: ...well, of course, Mr. Pitt will *always* be popular with the mob. They'd much rather the King had an Englishman whispering in his ear. But I don't think, ahh... excuse me.

SERVANT [whispers to Bute]: Pardon me, my Lord. The lady has just arrived...?

BUTE: Oh. Yes. Of course.

F/X: The person to whom Bute is speaking mutters his understanding, and moves away. The background noise fades slightly, suggesting that Bute's stepped away from the crowd.

BUTE: Madam. You are, I assume, Miss... Justine?

JUSTINE: I am. And do I have the honour of addressing the leader of His Majesty's government?

BUTE [troubled]: Yes. Yes, you do. **[To the SERVANT]** Thankyou, Crowden. You can start to clear the hall now. **[He waits until the SERVANT is clear before speaking.]** I won't lie to you, madam. I don't pretend to understand where you people come from, and I admit to a certain... uneasiness about your presence. But there *is* a treaty of acceptance between your state and ours. I hope we understand each other?

F/X: During the next few lines, the crowd noise begins to fade. The room is being cleared.

JUSTINE: Perfectly. And how, may I ask, does His Majesty feel about us?

BUTE: His Majesty is... somewhat eccentric.

JUSTINE: I see.

BUTE: He has no patience with things he doesn't understand. He has a tendency to ignore what isn't convenient to his way of thinking.

JUSTINE [dryly]: I assure you, it's quite natural to feel uneasy. Perhaps it's better that His Majesty makes no effort to understand us. I wouldn't want to put the sovereign's sanity at risk.

BUTE: I'd thank you to remember that we're speaking of King George the Third. I hardly think anyone could call him *mad*.

JUSTINE [deadpan]: Of course not.

GEORGE III [loudly, above the diminishing crowd noise]: Bute! Bute? Where is the blessed man?

BUTE: Your Majesty?

GEORGE III [closer]: What *is* all this, Bute? Everybody's leaving! Did *I* give anybody leave to go? Hmm?

BUTE: I thought it best to have the room cleared. Just of those who aren't as... *safe* as we are.

GEORGE: Safe? What on Earth do you mean, safe? **[BUTE whispers something to him.]** The Ambassadors from...? Oh, *that*. I see. Very well. Where is she? Bring her on! Bring her on!

F/X: Although the crowd noise has already dipped, a quite deliberate hush now falls over it. We can hear the occasional whisper from those present, but the room's quiet enough to let us hear Justine's feet on the tiled floor as she steps forward.

JUSTINE: Your majesty. I'm honoured.

GEORGE: Good day, my dear. Well well. So you're the girl from Faction Paradox who's been causing all the fuss, is that right?

BUTE: Err... your majesty...

GEORGE: Hmm?

BUTE: Do you think it's wise to say... that is, with so many people still here...

GEORGE: Oh, nonsense. Why, my own grandfather did business with these Paradox people, back in... when was it again?

BUTE: Ten years ago, I believe.

GEORGE: Ten years ago. Yes. When you and I were both children, eh, Ambadress? And Bute here was as old as he's always been.

JUSTINE: Business, your majesty?

GEORGE: Yes. Yes. I believe your people wanted to buy... eleven days, was it? Eleven days out of our calendar. Purely ceremonial, I'm sure. Personally I don't hold with the sort of thing you heathen types do. But business is business, isn't that so? And you *have* helped us with the war effort. Eleven Days' worth of profits helps keep the French at bay, hmm?

BUTE: Your majesty, the Ambadress is only here to announce herself. After that *incident* at Medmenham Abbey -

GEORGE: Oh, *that*. Just a misunderstanding, I was told. Nothing to worry about now. Your people do know how to look after yourselves, don't you?

JUSTINE: Your majesty knows us well.

GEORGE: Well, I remember! I remember, when I was a boy. Such a demonstration, you put on for us. A gentleman... somebody's Godfather, I think he said he was... gave this quite astonishing display for my father's Court. My father and my grandfather couldn't stand each other, you know, so when my grandfather found out that - **[BUTE coughs, quite deliberately. GEORGE is distracted by this.]** Are you well, Bute?

BUTE: Yes, your majesty.

GEORGE: Glad to hear it. Of course, we won't be needing the help of you Faction people any more, not the way we did ten years ago. Not with the *new* help we're getting -

BUTE [desperately butting in]: Your Majesty -

JUSTINE: *New* help?

BUTE: Matters of state, Madam Ambassador.

JUSTINE [after considering]: Of course. Then if your majesty is satisfied, then perhaps I might take me leave...?

GEORGE: Ehh? Oh, yes. Granted.

F/X: Some murmuring in the crowd as Justine turns, her footsteps loud and clear as she begins to move away.

GEORGE: No, wait. Wait one moment.

JUSTINE [stopping]: Majesty?

GEORGE: It just occurred to me... the demonstration I saw. The man's shadow had six arms, and they all had swords, and -

BUTE: Your Majesty, I don't think -

GEORGE: Oh, quiet, Bute. It occurs to me... would you consider giving us a similar demonstration, Ambassadors?

JUSTINE: Of course. Although I can't promise six arms, I'm afraid.

GEORGE: Bute! I have a splendid idea. We should show the Ambassadors the automaton.

BUTE: Majesty! Surely it's not -

JUSTINE: Automaton?

GEORGE: I'm sure you'd find it most interesting. Of course, one doesn't generally approve of fighting within the Palace walls...

JUSTINE: Fighting?

GEORGE: ...but it *would* only be a demonstration, after all. A bit like the trooping of the colour, I suppose.

JUSTINE: Your Majesty, although I'm sure I'd be happy to give you any demonstration you might desire -

GEORGE: Excellent! [**Calling to the servants.**] Bring out the machine!

BUTE: Really, I have to say -

F/X: The sound of doors opening. Not a creaking sound, but a big, booming, impressive sound, great double-doors being thrust open. An excited muttering runs through the crowd - or at least, those parts of the crowd still present - as the onlookers see what's standing in the doorway.

GEORGE: A-hah! You see, Bute? It comes when it's called!

F/X: The whirring of clockwork begins again, just as we heard it in the pre-credits scene. The automaton is approaching, its gears growing louder with every step.

JUSTINE: Dear God.

GEORGE: Ambassadors! I understand that you've hardly had a Christian upbringing, but language like that should *not* be used in this Court.

F/X: With the hiss of machinery, the automaton stops before the King.

JUSTINE: A homunculus...

GEORGE: Homunculus! Yes! That's exactly what it is. Bute here calls it an "automaton", of course. Don't you, Bute?

BUTE: It's simply a machine...

GEORGE: Yes, yes. But I do have the greatest admiration for good machinery.

JUSTINE [largely to herself]: It shouldn't be here.

GEORGE: Well, of course it should! It was a gift.

JUSTINE: A gift?

GEORGE: That's right. Why don't you tell her, eh?

F/X: A moment's whirring from the automaton. Maybe that's the sound of machine-parts moving inside its head.

AUTOMATON: His illustrious Majesty does this worthless machine a great honour by introducing him to such exalted company.

GEORGE: Ha-hah! Splendid.

JUSTINE: It talks?

AUTOMATON: My lady has most enviable perception. I am the humble servant of the Munificent Army of Peking. I have the inestimable privilege of serving this highest of Courts.

JUSTINE: A Chinese mannequin.

BUTE [clears his throat]: His majesty has new allies...

JUSTINE: I can believe it.

GEORGE: Now, my little Peking soldier. You're armed, I trust?

F/X: A sword being cleanly drawn from its scabbard. Along with the usual clicking of joints.

AUTOMATON: My sword, as my life, is bound to the instruction of your most celebrated Majesty.

BUTE: Please... is this really a place for armed combat?

GEORGE: Chivalry, Bute, it's chivalry. We're living in the new heroic age. New heroic fighters and new heroic tournaments, that's what we need. You've read Bishop Hurd, haven't you?

BUTE: No, your majesty.

GEORGE: Well, neither have I. But he must know what he's talking about, or he wouldn't be a Bishop. Think of this as an experiment, if you like. Putting the new machinery through its paces. And as for you, soldier... you won't hurt the Ambassadors, will you?

JUSTINE: I assure you, the machine may be as rough as it likes.

GEORGE: Splendid! Soldier? You see the Ambassadors?

AUTOMATON: It is a source of unparalleled joy to make the lady's acquaintance.

GEORGE: Good. Then I'd appreciate it if you'd attack her for me.

BUTE: Majesty!

GEORGE: It's all quite scientific, Bute.

AUTOMATON: It would be an honour to dispatch her noble self for your majesty's regal desire.

JUSTINE: "Dispatch"?

AUTOMATON: To quote my lady's most radiant words: "the machine may be as rough as it likes".

F/X: Sword whistling through the air. Justine briefly cries out as it goes past, more out of surprise than actual fear. The clattering of the machine's joints gets louder when it strikes.

GEORGE: My word. It *is* fast.

AUTOMATON: The lady is advised not to move. A clean cut will be less painful to her incomparable person.

F/X: A double-strike of the sword.

BUTE: Majesty, I think -

GEORGE: Oh, come now. It's only a demonstration.

F/X: Another sword strike. This time there's the crash of breaking pottery at the end, so presumably the machine has smashed something in its attempt to hit Justine.

AUTOMATON: With deference to the lady's position, I fear her attempts to escape are misguided.

JUSTINE: Very well.

F/X: The sound of a shadow-weapon being wielded. It ends with an impact which sounds as if it causes sparks to fly. The idea is that the machine's parried with its sword.

GEORGE: You see, Bute? You see?

AUTOMATON: The lady is a warrior of most exceptional breeding.

F/X: Another shadow-strike. Another parry.

AUTOMATON: It is to my shame that I am the superior fighting machine.

JUSTINE: Indeed?

F/X: A whole series of shadow-strikes, sword-strikes, and parrying noises. A brief Errol Flynn swordfight ensues throughout the next few lines of dialogue.

BUTE: Majesty, she's proved what she is. Tell the machine to stop...

GEORGE: Patience, old friend. Patience.

F/X: Massive shadow-strike, louder than we're used to hearing. This time, the impact sounds like it throws up more sparks than ever. We get the feeling that the blow hasn't been parried this time.

JUSTINE: I hope I've made my point..

AUTOMATON: Happily, I must concede that I have been wounded -

F/X: Another shadow-strike, another impact.

AUTOMATON: I joyously add that the damage is worsening -

F/X: And again.

AUTOMATON: I must congratulate her most fragrant person for -

F/X: And again. Now there's a fizzing sound at the end of the impact, as if the machine's wires have been severed, soon followed by a clattering thud when it hits the floor. The room falls silent except for the mumbling of surprised onlookers.

JUSTINE: Have I proved myself, your Majesty?

GEORGE [applauding, but only briefly]: Of course, of course. You're to be congratulated, my dear. An excellent show.

BUTE: But the machine -

GEORGE: Oh, well worth the sacrifice for that display. Besides, there are more where that came from.

JUSTINE: More?

BUTE [hurriedly]: Good. Well then. You'll be returning to your friends at Medmenham, I hope?

JUSTINE: I'm staying here in London, if it pleases the Court. But I'll pass your best wishes to my associates.

GEORGE: You do that, Ambassador.

BUTE [irked]: Yes. You do that.

Fade.

3.25

F/X: Another new setting. This one is obviously a large indoor space, as there's a distinct echo. Several characters are walking into the middle of the wide open area as we join the scene.

ELIZA: St. Paul's Cathedral. Doesn't change much, does it? I got dragged to see this place when I was a kid.

SANDWICH: A kid?

ELIZA: Yeah. Kid. You know. Baby goat. So, why are we here?

F/X: By now they've stopped moving.

SANDWICH: It... seemed appropriate. The Cathedral's a site of great importance to us. Wren... the architect...

JUSTINE: Had certain interests in common with your Order.

SANDWICH: He believed that architecture aimed at eternity. And if I may say so, eternity's always been a subject of interest to us.

D'EON: Much as the prospect of exploring a gigantic female breast fascinates me, my Lord, some of us *do* have other engagements.

JUSTINE: Espionage, for example.

D'EON: As you say. **[N.B. there should be a feeling there's some tension between these two.]**

SANDWICH: Believe me, d'Eon, I didn't call you all here for the sake of amusement.

D'EON: And I thought your entire Order was dedicated to the idea of amusement. Then why *are* we here?

SANDWICH [clears his throat, tries to sound ceremonial]: I know you all wondered *why* a soirée was held at the Abbey, at a time like this. I know you all feel it was unwise, given... given the presence of you Cousins.

JUSTINE: I assumed it was a form of ritual. A binding of your Order and our Faction.

SANDWICH [apparently a bit nervous at this prospect]: I suppose so.

JUSTINE: I take it the orders came from your Mr. Dashwood?

SANDWICH: Well... well, the fact is, old Dashwood's a bit tied up at the moment. What with his duties as Chancellor and all -

JUSTINE: Then you'd like us to meet the true head of the Order.

SANDWICH: Now, I wouldn't say *that*, exactly -

JUSTINE: Which is why you've called us here. To this rendezvous.

F/X: There's a moment's hesitation before Sandwich begins to move off and the footsteps begin again.

SANDWICH: Please. Just follow me.

Fade.

F/X: The background is one of complete silence... soon disturbed by the sound of a door being smashed open, with some force. There are heavy footsteps on wooden floorboards as several figures enter the room.

BUTE: Sabbath!

SABBATH: Good afternoon, sir. I see you've brought some of your friends with you.

BUTE: You were summoned to the Star Chamber. An hour ago!

SABBATH: I know.

BUTE [he's about to shout some more, then apparently notices that something's not right here]: Sabbath... what in the name of God are you doing?

SABBATH: I'm not sure yet. I think it's a form of meditation.

BUTE: All that blood...

SABBATH: Don't worry. It's my own. Did you want something, sir?

BUTE [back on track]: The King. He's... there's something wrong with him.

SABBATH: That's the general mood of the nation, yes.

BUTE: I'm serious, Sabbath. Do you know what His Majesty did this morning?

SABBATH: No. What?

BUTE: He ordered a fight. A duel. In the middle of one of his levees.

SABBATH: A fight? Between whom?

BUTE [thrown for a second]: That's not the issue. The point is, he's becoming unstable.

SABBATH: You mean, you can't control him?

BUTE: Sabbath!

SABBATH: I apologise. You mean, his first minister can't control him?

BUTE: If you think I'm going to let you -

SABBATH: Why aren't you telling me what's really going on at St. James's?

BUTE [considers for a moment]: There's a new weapon. A new form of military machine. It's being tested.

SABBATH: At St. James's? Wouldn't an army barracks be a better place?

BUTE: Yours is not to question why, Sab... **[Again, he notices something amiss.]** Good God. Your arm...

SABBATH: I know. Excuse me one moment, I'm in the process of making another incision.

BUTE: The markings... how many times have you cut yourself, man?

SABBATH: Eight, so far. Every cut deeper than the last. It's all quite methodical, I assure you.

BUTE: The glass! You're cutting yourself with that piece of glass, aren't you? You don't seriously believe -

SABBATH: You saw what happened at Medmenham, sir. You saw the *entity* Cousin Justine had at her disposal. From what we know of Faction Paradox, their ritual can call up all manner of presences like that.

BUTE [horrified]: You think *you* can perform these, these rituals?

SABBATH: I'm not sure. The glass was definitely used to summon something. Whenever I draw blood with it, I can feel them. The presences. Trying to communicate. Using my flesh as a medium.

BUTE: Good God, man! You've got to stop! You can't summon one of those *things* here!

SABBATH: I thought you said it was nonsense? Besides which, I'm not likely to summon one in its entirety. I'd probably have to half-kill myself. But it's a fascinating process, feeling them try to make contact with my body. I'm sorry, I'm getting distracted. Did you have new orders for me, sir?

BUTE [back in control]: Just be ready, Sabbath. Events are moving too quickly for my liking. Be ready the next time I call for you.

SABBATH: Of course.

Fade.

3.27

F/X: Cathedral background. Judging by the sound of footsteps, the group's moving up a flight of steps.

JUSTINE: We're heading for the Whispering Gallery.

SANDWICH: You know this Cathedral?

JUSTINE: The Gallery *is* its best-know feature, I believe. The gullible claim it has spiritual properties. That anyone who speaks there has a part of

their essence trapped by the architecture.

SANDWICH: Wren was... a little ambitious in his designs.

F/X: The steps end. Everybody stops moving.

SANDWICH [addressing them all]: Please, ladies. And, er, gentleman.

D'EON: *Apprécié.*

SANDWICH: Behind this curtain is the individual to whom you're answerable, as long as you're under the protection of the Order. I'd ask that you show a certain respect, and I'd ask that when you -

ELIZA: Let's not overplay this, all right?

F/X: A forceful pulling-back of the curtain. Then a surprised pause from Eliza.

ELIZA: Oh. Hi

MISTRESS CULVER: You must be Eliza. I was wondering where you'd got to.

ELIZA: Sorry, it's just... after all that build-up, I was expecting someone a bit more impressive.

MISTRESS CULVER: Why, aren't I interesting enough for you?

JUSTINE: Excuse us. But I feel we should at least be introduced.

SANDWICH: Ladies, please, if you'll show some respect -

MISTRESS CULVER: It's all right, Sandwich. If you want to give me a name, you can call me Mary. Does that make things easier?

D'EON: Mary?

MISTRESS CULVER: Is that a problem?

D'EON: Excuse me, my Lady, but... one can't help noticing the sash at your neck.

MISTRESS CULVER: Let's just say it's covering up some nasty scar tissue.

ELIZA: You're Mary Culver. You're the one who slit her own throat.

MISTRESS CULVER: Personally I'd say I'm slightly more than that now, but it'll do for the time being.

JUSTINE: And are we supposed to trust you?

MISTRESS CULVER: Well, let me put it like this. I know you're carrying the shadow of Grandfather Paradox, I know that you and Eliza are the only ones who got away from the Eleven-Day Empire before it got eaten, and I know you're running from the Homeworld because you secretly don't think you belong there even though you're the last representative of your House who really means anything. Also, I know things you *don't* know.

JUSTINE: Such as?

MISTRESS CULVER: I know that back on the Homeworld, the Great Houses are pretty much at each other's throats and House Lolita's gaining influence so fast that soon it'll run the whole Spiral Politic. I know that eighteenth-century Earth is going to be the battlefield where the last stand against House Lolita's going to be made, and I know that if you're not careful then one of these days you're going to get yourself killed by someone *else* who thinks they're carrying the legacy of the Faction. Is that enough for you?

ELIZA: Can't deny it. She's a scary one.

JUSTINE: And might I ask how you know all of this, my Lady?

MISTRESS CULVER: Because when Mary Culver opened herself up to the outside universe, you got lucky. Someone who's on *your* side got let in. And that's me. Now, do you want me to explain everything, or not?

SANDWICH: Er... well, I can see you ladies have a lot to talk about. Would you like me to step outside for a moment...?

Fade.

3.28

F/X: The catacombs, the same great subterranean space as in the pre-credits sequence. We hear a latch being drawn up, a heavy door opening, then a single set of footsteps slowly moving down the stairs. When the steps finally end, it takes a while for the man to say anything.

BUTE [mumbling]: Merciful God.

F/X: The sudden whirring of an automaton's joints.

AUTOMATON: My most sublime Lord...

BUTE: Aaah! [**Recovering himself.**] I thought you were asleep.

AUTOMATON: I beg the forgiveness of my Lord, the Earl of Bute. I regret to say that I have not yet been deactivated.

BUTE: Your, ahh... your brother took a beating upstairs. I don't think he'll be fighting again.

AUTOMATON: With my majestic Lord's permission, my worthless Brother the Dog was not the greatest of fighters. My majestic Lord should not concern himself with such things.

BUTE: Dog? What Dog?

GEORGE [from a distance, i.e. upstairs]: Bute?

F/X: George descends the stairs, talking as he goes.

GEORGE: Ah, there you are. Quite a display we had this morning, wasn't it?

BUTE: With respect, your Majesty, I'd have to ask whether such a spectacle is fitting for the Palace...

GEORGE: Oh, nonsense, nonsense. I mean to say, if it were two *gentlemen* fighting then it'd be disgraceful, wouldn't it? But a foreigner and a machine, well now...

AUTOMATON: Your eminent Majesty does our kind a great service by regarding us as less than human.

GEORGE: Precisely! And there are plenty more where *you* come from, eh? Plenty enough for the grand procession.

BUTE: Your Majesty, I wanted to speak to you on that matter. Are you sure it's wise to display the new army in quite that fashion? It could give a tactical advantage to the enemies of Britain...

GEORGE: Not at all, old friend, not at all. Once the French see these, they'll run a mile, won't they? This should *really* put England... oh, I beg your pardon. This should really put *Britain* at the forefront of military achievement. Well, let's not dilly-dally. Let's inspect the troops, shall we? I'm going to have to face Parliament soon, we can't spend all day down here.

AUTOMATON: If your Majesty will follow this most irrelevant artifice...?

F/X: The automaton begins its hissing, clanking walk, leading George and Bute further into the catacombs. The men talk as they walk, but it's not long before the automaton stops again.

GEORGE: Astonishing. Quite astonishing. Makes you wonder how those Chinese do it.

BUTE: Galvanic electricity, I should imagine. Your majesty, we may be moving too quickly -

GEORGE: Galvanic, you say?

BUTE: Galvani. The Italian. He claims he can use electricity to make dead frogs dance.

GEORGE: Now, why on *Earth* would he want to do a thing like that?

BUTE: I'm not sure. Your majesty, please, listen to me -

AUTOMATON: His Majesty's army awaits His benevolent inspection.

GEORGE: Hah! Look at them, Bute. Just look at them! Make those little steam-toys of mine look positively old-fashioned.

F/X: The sound of an automaton coming to life... but multiplied. There's more than one of the machines here. In fact, as the whirring sounds continue to echo around the catacombs, we start to realise that there are an *awful* lot of them.

GEORGE: Three-hundred clockwork warriors! Aren't they magnificent, Bute?

F/X: The whirring goes on, and on, and on. The more automata wake up, the longer the echo continues and the louder the sound gets, until it's a seething, rattling din that seems to have no end.

BUTE [more than a little anxious now]: Your Majesty... excuse me, I have business elsewhere...

F/X: The sound shows no sign of stopping as the scene begins to...

Fade.

3.29

F/X: Back to St. Paul's Cathedral. Note that although there's still an echo, the group is assembled in the Whispering Gallery rather than the central part of the Cathedral.

JUSTINE: Let me see if I understand you. You're an agent of the Great Houses, is that correct?

MISTRESS CULVER: Call me a neutral party.

D'EON: I'm not sure I follow. You claim to represent some unknown power...?

JUSTINE [a bit snotty here]: Please, d'Eon. This is hardly your concern. **[To MISTRESS.]** And you've been following events on the Homeworld?

MISTRESS CULVER: *Somebody* has to. After Lolita swallowed your Empire, everyone was falling over themselves to make alliances with her. She's got the ear of the ruling Houses, these days.

JUSTINE: Then you're saying it's too dangerous for myself and Eliza to go there.

MISTRESS CULVER: You'd like to think that, wouldn't you? No sense of commitment.

ELIZA: You're saying Justine *should* go?

MISTRESS CULVER: Not right now. Now House Lolita's got the Homeworld covered, it's starting to expand its influence. Taking control of all the backwaters where the major powers have already out down roots.

ELIZA: You mean, like here.

MISTRESS CULVER: Obviously. Faction Paradox contaminated this part of the Spiral Politic ten years ago. No offence.

D'EON: Then this House Lolita... it's planning an invasion? Of Britain?

MISTRESS CULVER: Of 1762. *Via* Britain.

JUSTINE: And the machine I saw this morning? The King's automaton?

MISTRESS CULVER: A present from the Great Houses. Over three-thousand years out of its own time. Lolita's followers are planning to get this whole period on her side with presents like that. The same way Faction Paradox got the *last* King's favour by buying the Eleven-Day Empire. Presumably, House Lolita's got an agent at the Royal Court.

D'EON: The Earl of Bute.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry?

D'EON: *If* you're prepared to listen to a lowly spy... the Earl of Bute's been the acting head of the Service ever since the King took the throne. His behaviour's become erratic ever since. He hires prizefighters to be his

bodyguards. There are rumours he wears a wig and a heavy coat whenever he has to walk through the city.

JUSTINE: He *sounds* suspicious, I have to admit.

D'EON: The Service's headquarters are well-known. Another of your "open secrets".

ELIZA: And we're supposed to stop him. That's what your saying, isn't it?

MISTRESS CULVER: Of course that's what I'm saying. That's why I came here.

JUSTINE [not convinced]: To give me a warning? How very philanthropic of you, my Lady.

MISTRESS CULVER: Oh, give me credit, please. I don't want you to trust me. I just want you to face facts. You can't do *anything* unless someone breaks House Lolita's power, and frankly I've got an even bigger reason to hate her than you have. So I'm here to give you all a briefing in advance. Are you with me so far?

D'EON: Excuse me, but I think you're forgetting. My loyalties lie with France. I know nothing of these "Houses".

ELIZA: I know. I didn't believe it at first, either.

D'EON: You misunderstand. I acknowledge that you... that *all* of you... represent powers of which I have only a limited knowledge. I was in Russia for long enough to see the *Ereticy* bring one of their number back from the dead. As an agent of the French Court, I'm well aware of the creatures that hunt our soldiers in the West Indies. I'm prepared to accept that there are greater schemes in the world than ours. However, I don't see how I'm involved.

MISTRESS CULVER: Really? You were sent to this country to help with the peace negotiations. You were ordered to compromise anybody who threatened France's interests. Don't deny it.

D'EON: I wouldn't attempt to. But, my Lady -

MISTRESS CULVER: Every power that exists now... British, French, Spanish, it doesn't matter... every power there is on this planet is going to be compromised if House Lolita gets away with the takeover. Justine's the only thing that can stop it -

ELIZA [not sounding happy]: That's nice to know.

MISTRESS CULVER: Justine *and her friends* are the only things that can stop it, and right now what they need most is a contact in this era. That's why I had you put under the Order's protection in the first place. Understand?

JUSTINE [long pause for consideration before she replies]: Very well. It seems we've all been conscripted in this war of yours.

MISTRESS CULVER: This isn't war. This is just resistance.

ELIZA: What, so we go after the head of the whole British spy network just because some dead whore in a scarf tells us to? **[Mimicking.]** No offence.

MISTRESS CULVER: None taken.

JUSTINE: It's all right, Eliza. For now, I think we can assume that Mistress "Mary" is telling the truth.

MISTRESS CULVER: Obviously.

JUSTINE: But I'd like to know one more thing.

MISTRESS CULVER: Go on.

JUSTINE: Precisely what are you? I still don't see why a supposedly neutral party would take such an interest in these affairs. Even if you *do* have a grudge to bear against House Lolita.

MISTRESS CULVER: You mean, why do I care? Well. It's out of...
[She chooses her next word very carefully, so we're left in doubt that there's something quite significant about her answer.] ...Compassion.

ELIZA: Right. *That's* good and vague.

Fade.

3.30

F/X: Silent background, interrupted by the door bursting open. Sabbath's rooms again. This time, however, only one set of footsteps can be heard dashing in.

BUTE: *Sabbath!* **[No response.]** Sabbath? Where are you, man? **[Still no answer.]** Sabbath, don't you try to hide from me or I'll show you what...

F/X: Another door opens, on the other side of the room. Bute sounds a bit put out from this point on.

BUTE: Sabbath?

F/X: Now then. When Sabbath speaks, something very odd has happened to his voice. Although he's clearly the same person, if anything he's more relaxed than ever, and there seems to be something else: a kind of (F/X) undercurrent to his voice, as if there's something *moving* under every sentence he says. (Note: when someone gets "possessed" in the movies it's normally indicated by slapping a crap echo/ pitch-shift over the top of the actor's voice, but this is more subtle. Sabbath's voice hasn't changed, in

itself. There's just a sense of something *else* underpinning his words whenever he opens his mouth, something wriggly and hissing.)

SABBATH: Sir. It's nice of you to visit me again. I see it's just you and the wig this time.

BUTE: Good God. What have you done to your hair...?

SABBATH: Shaved most of it off. It seemed to be getting between me and the higher powers. [**Considers this.**] To be frank, that's hardly a rational belief, is it? Still. Call it a moment of madness.

BUTE: In the name of Jesus, man... your arms. Your arms are covered in -

SABBATH: Yes. The glass, I'm afraid.

BUTE: You cut yourself open...

SABBATH: I thought I could reign it in. And in all honesty, I *can*, up to a point. I'm not letting the... well, let's call it a "presence". I'm not letting the "presence" take absolute control of me. But it's having an effect, I can't deny that.

BUTE: You're possessed!

SABBATH: Interesting idea. Myself, I take the materialistic view. My interior seems to have been reconfigured, that's certainly true. I only wonder whether Mary Culver experienced the same thing.

BUTE: Something's inside you? From the glass?

SABBATH: I like to think of it as a reconstruction. I feel... I feel as if I have a mission to complete. It seems to go beyond my duty to the Service. Not what I expected at all.

BUTE: For Heaven's sake, Sabbath, we need you! The King, he's -

SABBATH: The King's an irrelevance. At least, that's what I'm being told.

BUTE: Told?

SABBATH: By the presence. Let's see. A fugitive, is that it? Something about Great Houses. Great bloodlines. Searching for a fugitive. The one who bears the... spirit? Shadow. The shadow of the Grandfather. Interesting.

BUTE: Sabbath, listen to me! I don't know what kind of *creatures* you think you're consorting with, but I can tell you -

SABBATH: It's no good, sir. I think it'd be a good idea to follow the presence's instructions, don't you? I have to hunt down the fugitive. Kill her, if necessary. Or at least bring her to justice.

BUTE: Kill somebody? Because this, this voice in your head tells you to?

SABBATH: This is our first communication with these "Great Houses". If we go along with their wishes, I'm sure we'll learn a great deal, don't you agree?

BUTE: Sabbath... you're insane.

F/X: The main door opens.

BUTE: Where d'you think you're going, man?

SABBATH: To find and deal with...

F/X: Just for a moment, we hear the wriggling, hissing under-voice *without* hearing Sabbath himself on top of it. But not for long.

SABBATH: ...ah. To find and deal with Cousin Justine. Well, of course. Now it all makes sense.

BUTE: Sabbath!

F/X: The door closes behind him. Sabbath has gone, leaving Bute alone in the room.

BUTE: *Sabbath!*

Fade.

End of Volume Three.